

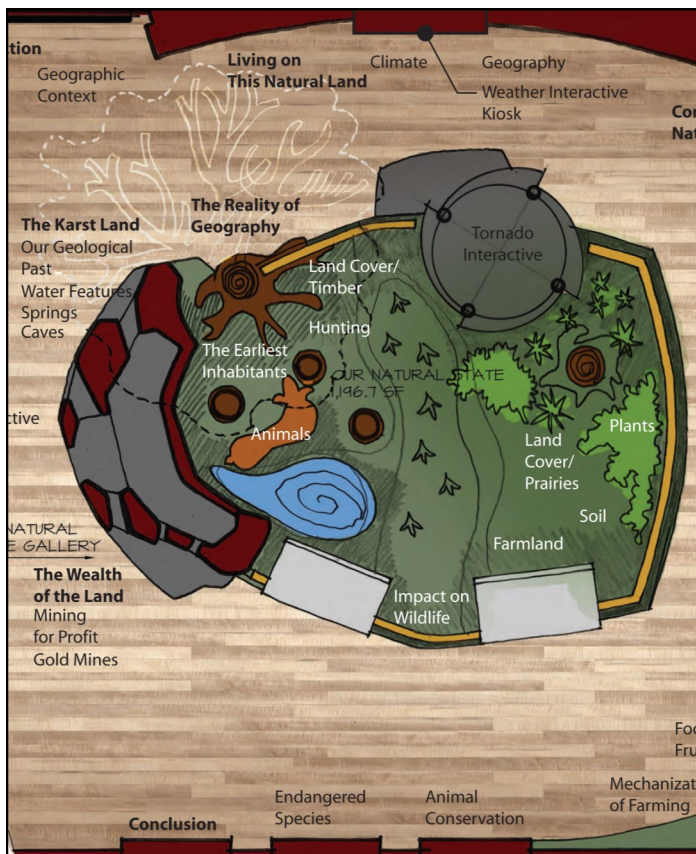
# Interpretive Plan Overview

A plan for exhibitions and programs in a museum is called an interpretive plan. The interpretive plan for the new Rogers Historical Museum facility was developed by the museum's staff under the leadership of Dr. Gaye Bland. During the planning process museum staff visited other museums, gathering ideas on exhibition design and technology. Public input was gathered through an audience research project, as well as surveys at the museum and on the museum's website.

After extensive information gathering, a committee of staff, commissioners, and audience representatives finalized the interpretive plan for the new RHM. The plan was reviewed by scholars as part of the successful application for a \$500,000 National Endowment for the Humanities challenge grant to support the museum expansion. Scholars and audience representatives will continue to be involved throughout the exhibition development process.

At the end of the planning process, a decision was made to divide the museum expansion's interpretive spaces into four parts: a permanent gallery with an orientation theater and five local history exhibitions, an entirely hands-on children's gallery, a collection's gallery, and a temporary exhibit gallery. The existing Hawkins House and programming goals are also included in the plan. The design phase of the permanent exhibits is being funded in part by a Federal grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

## Permanent Exhibitions



The five local history exhibits will explore the people, places, events, and natural history that define the special character of this area, with collection objects serving as tangible links between present and past. A central theme is the entrepreneurial spirit that fostered the area's economic vitality over time. Hands-on activities and computer interactives will create a dynamic, engaging environment where visitors can explore guided by their curiosity.

## Our Natural State

This exhibit will illustrate the impact of geology, geography, weather, and natural resources on the lives of people in this area over time. Visitors will be able to explore natural history through a fossil touch shelf, a mineral matching game, and interactive maps. In the center of the gallery will be an area where lightning flashes overhead and a tornado forms at the touch of a button. There visitors can see a representation of this area's forests and prairies as they were when the first settlers arrived.

## Road and Rail

Imagine exploring transportation in the past by packing your wagon to go West or stepping into a “locomotive” to experience driving a steam train using a simulator. Through images, maps, object displays, video, and interactives this exhibit will explore how changes in transportation affected both the economy and patterns of migration. Specific topics will include pioneer settlement, early craftsmen, the Trail of Tears, the Butterfield Overland Mail, the Civil War, the arrival of the Frisco Railroad, and this region’s early development as a fruit growing center. A highlight of the exhibit will be a 1910s silent film made in Rogers that shows local people going about their daily lives.



## America's Heartland



Entrepreneurship and the quest for the “good life” were common themes in area history from the end of World War I into the 1950s. This exhibit will of course introduce significant individuals such as newspaper editor Erwin Funk, Betty Blake (Mrs. Will) Rogers, Louise Thaden, author Tom Morgan, and New Deal politician Clyde Ellis, one of the fathers of rural electrification. But it also will explore how this community’s farmers, small businessmen, homemakers, and workers shaped the character of Rogers.

Visitors will explore the birth and growth of the modern poultry industry, the challenges of the Great Depression, wartime experiences, and the impact of industrial recruitment after World War II. The 1954 film *America's Heartland* will play in its entirety, and youngsters can imagine themselves queen for a day on a replica of the 1920s Apple Blossom Festival throne. A highlight will be a portrait wall set into a recreation of a mid-1900s front porch. There visitors can relax as they choose from among the dozens of area residents who will tell their stories in their own words, illustrated by photographs of Rogers as they experienced it.



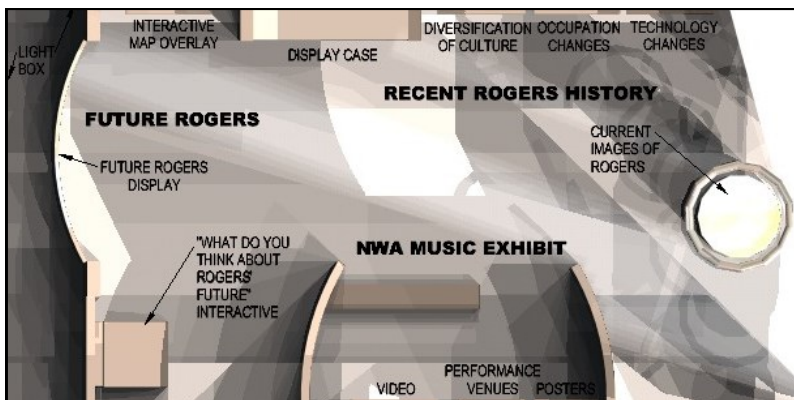


## White River

This exhibit will illustrate the role of the White River in our area's economic and social life. It will examine the growth of tourism centered around the White River, including Monte Ne and organized float fishing, as well as explain the reasons for the building of Beaver Dam and its impact on individual lives and regional development. Videos, exhibit panels, photographs, collections objects, and maps will provide a depth of information to visitors. Interactives will include a flooding valley model and hydroelectric power demonstration as well as areas where visitors can build a block dam and explore a re-creation of an Indian bluff shelter.



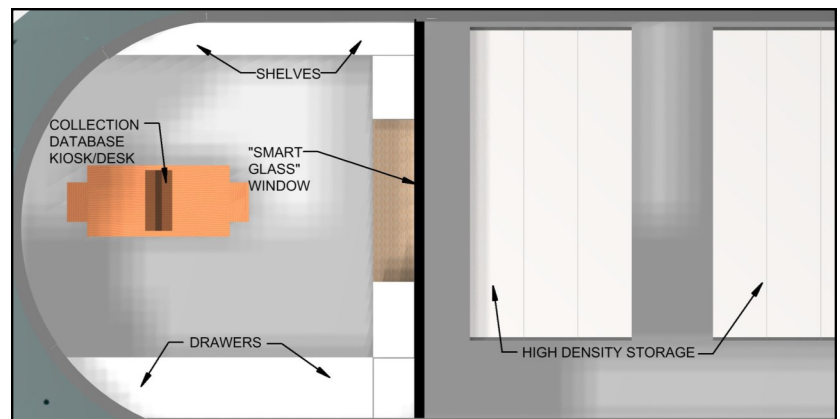
## Our Place



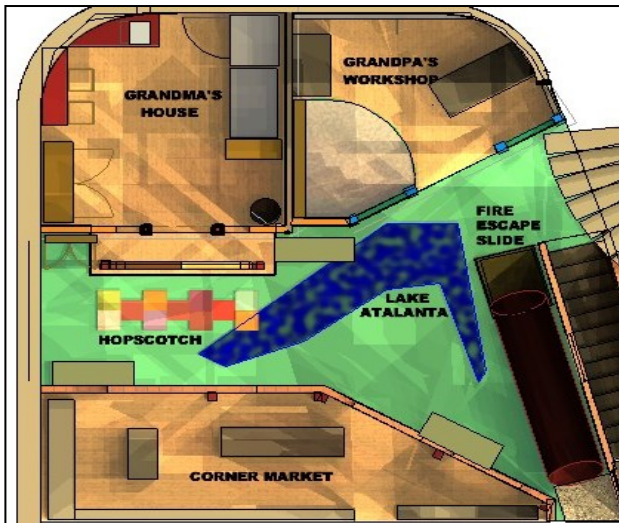
This exhibit will explore the period within recent memory, encouraging visitors to think about the challenges of growth and the region's future. Topics will include the economic changes since World War II and how they affected the region, leading to both increased cultural richness and cultural conflict. The growth of Hudson Foods, Walmart, Carmart and other businesses will be featured. An interactive will allow visitors to explore cultural diversity through music.

## Permanent Collections Gallery

The collections gallery will give visitors the sense that they have walked into collections storage. Some items will be on permanent display, but sensitive objects such as textiles will be rotated quarterly. A window will provide a view into one of the museum's actual storage areas. A computer kiosk will be available where visitors can explore the entire collection.



# Hands-On History Children's Gallery



The children's gallery will encourage role-playing as youngsters move back and forth from one area to another. The corner market will help develop basic skills as youngsters weigh and measure as they buy and sell. Then off to the 1950s Grandma's house to "cook" a meal or play dress-up. A building area in Grandpa's workshop will allow younger children to develop their motor skills as they stack foam blocks. Meanwhile older siblings can use vintage tools or assemble a model of a timber-frame structure. Visitors can touch a button to project a hopscotch court or miniature lake on the gallery floor. Youngsters can go down a tube slide modeled on an old-fashioned school fire escape.



## Temporary Exhibit Gallery

The Temporary (Traveling) Exhibit Gallery will provide a venue for special museum installations and nationally known traveling exhibits. Many of the traveling exhibits currently available for display require 1,200 to 2,000 square feet of display space. The 2,000-square-foot gallery will allow us to both host high-profile traveling exhibits on natural and cultural history and produce our own rotating exhibitions.

## The Hawkins House

The 1895 Hawkins House will continue to be a distinct, permanent exhibit as part of the Rogers Historical Museum visitor experience. The house presents a glimpse of how a middle-class family lived in small-town Arkansas at the turn of the 20th century. In this immersive experience visitors are surrounded by the furnishings, tools, clothing, toys, and other objects of the early 20th century as they would have been arranged and used.

## Programming

The museum will offer a wide variety of programs for all ages in the planned new facility. Volunteer gallery guides in the permanent exhibits will engage visitors and help them take advantage of the various interactive components. School programming will continue to be central to the museum's mission. The Hawkins House and the planned permanent exhibits address many of the topics taught in local schools. A large auditorium with full audiovisual capabilities will also be available near the galleries. The current Key Wing will house a generous classroom and activity area.